

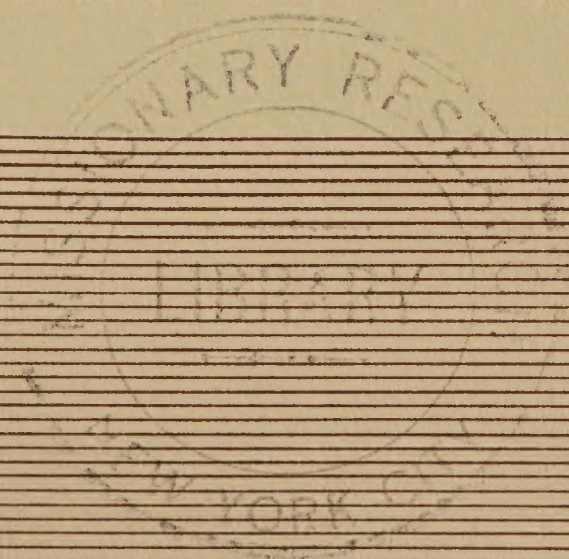
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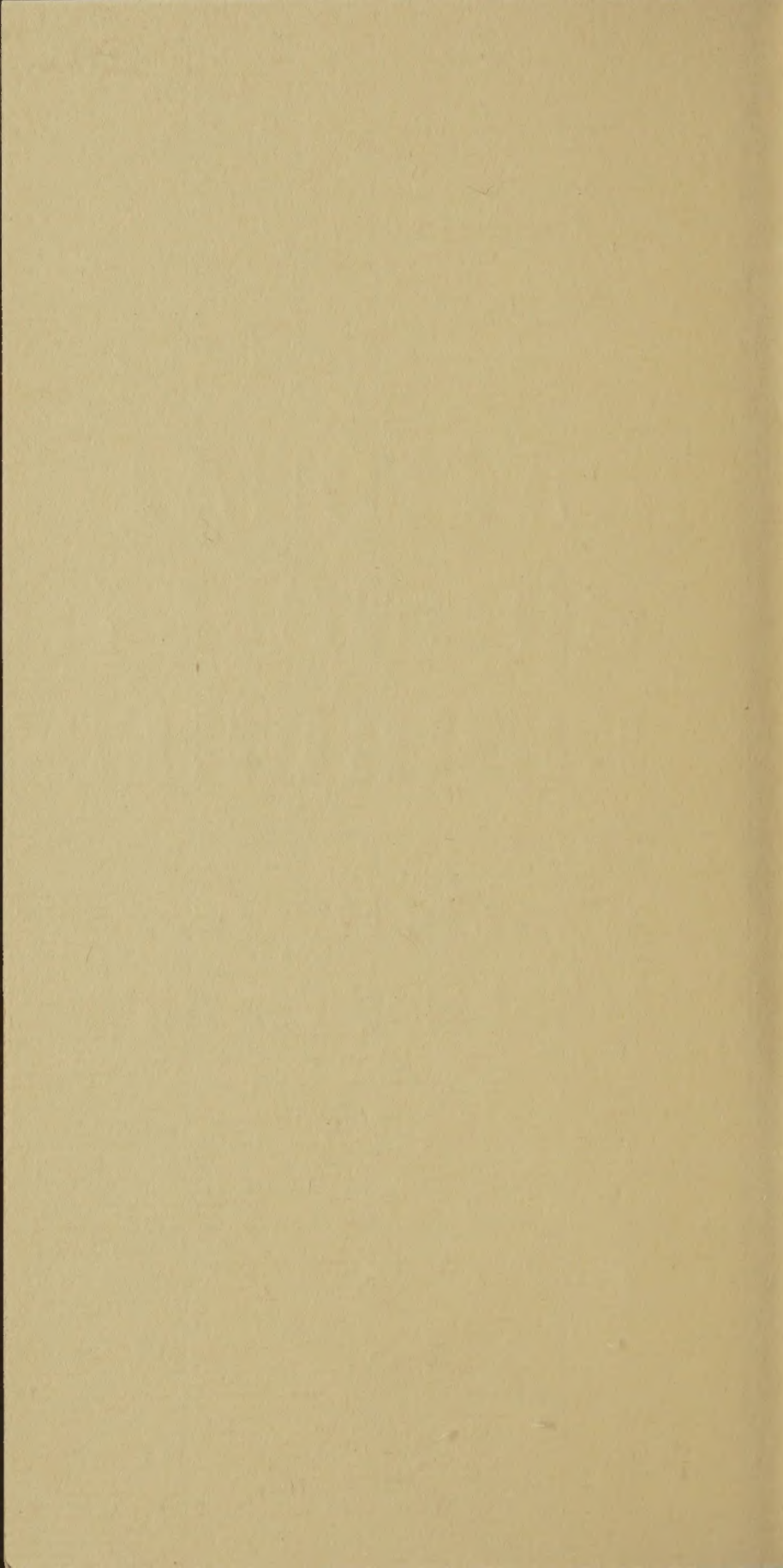
MISC.
NCCF USA

the NATIONAL
COUNCIL of
CHURCHES

what is it?

what does it do?





the National Council of Churches

What is it?

What does it do?

1.

What Is the National Council of Churches?

A fellowship of thirty nationwide churches, with more than 34,000,000 members, that desire to co-operate in all their common tasks. It is a practical expression of the unity of spirit and purpose which Christian people have because of their common loyalty to Christ, even though they belong to different denominations. The Council is not something apart from the churches but the churches themselves doing together those things which can be better done unitedly than separately.

2.

Why Is the Council Important?

Because co-operation among the churches is necessary to meet the moral and spiritual crisis of our time. The Council is the means of effecting a united rallying of Christian forces, a united planning in all areas of Christian activity, and a united Christian impact upon the life of the nation and the world. This process of mutual reinforcement strengthens each church in the Council.

3.

What Churches Belong to the Council?

Thirty national denominations, representing most of the major historic bodies of American Christianity, except the Roman Catholic. These include Baptists, Brethren, Congregationalists, Disciples, Eastern Orthodox, Episcopalians, Evangelical United Brethren, Friends, Lutherans, Methodists, Moravians, Presbyterians, Reformed, and others.

The full list is given on pages 11 and 12. The thirty denominations have a combined membership of 34,691,852 in 143,418 local congregations — the largest association of Christian people in America.

4.

How Was the Council Created?

Directly by the churches themselves. It came into being in 1950 when a carefully drawn constitution had been officially ratified by the highest authority of each of the member communions, and when the application for a corporate charter had been approved by the State of New York. After many years of increasing co-operation in various activities through *twelve* interdenominational agencies, the denominations now transferred their co-operative work to *one* agency — the National Council — representing the interests of all.

5.

What Is the Spiritual Center of the Council?

Faith in Jesus Christ as Divine Lord and Savior. This recognition of the Deity and Lordship of Christ is imbedded in the constitution of the Council, and consequently all the churches of the Council belong to the evangelical family. Doctrinal formulations are outside the province of the Council since each communion reserves these to itself. The Council simply takes its stand upon the common ground of the historic Christian convictions held by the co-operating churches.

6.

How Is the Council Supervised and Governed?

By official representatives — ministers and lay men and women — of the thirty communions that comprise it. A General Assembly of 600 members appointed directly by the co-operating denominations meets every two years. A General Board of about 125 members meets bimonthly as the interim supervisory body. It is the delegated representatives of the churches that are responsible for the policies and programs of the Council. It reports regularly to each of the denominations and is subject to their review. The Council is in no sense a “free lance” organization. It is a *council of churches* responsible to the communions which established it as their agency for co-operation. No individual can speak for it.

7.

What Authority Has the Council over the Churches?

None. It is in no sense a “superchurch” or super-organization. It depends wholly on the principle of voluntary co-operation through democratic representative processes. It is completely committed to the maintenance of our cherished freedom. It rejects all thought of enforced uniformity. It seeks only the kind of unity which is consistent with liberty and diversity. As leaders of the churches meet and work together they find that the Christian convictions and interests which they have in common are far more important than their differences. They also discover that co-operation does not require any church to relinquish any part of its own historic heritage. The Council can, therefore, have a great Christian influence without exercising any control over any church.

8.

How Does the Council Do Its Work?

(A) Through four main "divisions": Home Missions, Foreign Missions, Christian Education, Christian Life and Work. The Board of Managers of each of these divisions includes denominational executives carrying corresponding responsibilities. Thus co-ordination of denominational programs is facilitated in every important area of service.

(B) Through "joint departments" for concerns — such as evangelism, stewardship, and family life — which are related to all divisions.

(C) Through "central departments" serving the total program of the co-operating churches in broadcasting and films, in public relations, in research and survey, in contacts with state and local councils, in Church World Service, and other interests.

(D) Through two General Departments of United Church Women and United Church Men, in which the laity of the churches unite their efforts along major lines of Christian activity.

9.

What Does the Council Do?

Its primary task is to co-ordinate the work of the denominations. Here are concrete illustrations of united projects conducted by the Council in 1952:

publishing the Revised Standard Version of the Bible
(two million copies the first year)

directing community-wide "Bible observances"
(3,400 in cities and towns in every state)

completing the resettlement of displaced persons in new homes
(52,000 resettled since the war)

holding preaching missions among youth in the armed forces
(83 missions in four months)

presenting Christian messages on all radio and television networks
(1,667 different programs, an average of four every day)

providing a "ministry-on-wheels" to migrant workers from Florida and the Rio Grande to Canada
(250,000 workers and their children served)

teaching illiterates around the world
(Participated in 45 campaigns of the type that has taught 60,000,000 people to read by the Laubach method.)

conducting "university Christian missions" in tax-supported institutions
(a week on 20 different campuses)

guiding released-time Weekday Religious Education and Daily Vacation Bible Schools
(3,500,000 children enrolled in these schools)

preparing and publishing Sunday school lesson outlines and missionary education textbooks
(used yearly by tens of thousands of local church groups)

collecting and publishing statistics of church membership and missionary and benevolent giving.
(Yearbook of American Churches is only overall reference book of its kind)

supplying chaplains on an interdenominational basis in hospitals and prisons
(Walter Reed Hospital, Bethesda, Halloran, Alcatraz, Leavenworth, Sing Sing)

uniting Christian people in devotional programs
(World Day of Prayer, for example, had 18,000 community-wide observances)

helping local communities to organize councils of churches for co-operative service
(*more than 900 local and state councils now functioning*)

maintaining and extending concrete projects to improve relations between races and nations
(*by institutes, educational literature and special projects*)

planning strategic national study conferences of church representatives
(*on such subjects as the Christian and His Daily Work, African Affairs, The Church and Rural Life.*)

The full record of the Council's service and activities is available in its 200-page *Biennial Report* (\$2.75)

10. How Is the Council Supported?

From three main sources:

- (A) direct contributions from the churches;
- (B) gifts of individuals;
- (C) appropriations by foundations, corporations, and other organizations.

Thirty per cent of the total income is "earned," resulting from publishing operations, sale of literature, rental of films and other payments for service rendered. Of the income derived from contributions about 60 per cent comes from the churches. The Council welcomes contributions from friends for current support, and gifts and bequests for the enlargement of the program.

The Operations Budget for 1953 is \$7,838,044, the chief items of which are (1) over-

seas program of relief and reconstruction through Church World Service — \$1,968,000; (2) Christian Education — \$1,400,000; (3) foreign missionary services financed co-operatively (Foreign Missions Division) — \$983,000; (4) Broadcasting and Films — \$717,000; (5) Home Missions Division — \$453,000; (5) Evangelism, Race Relations, International Justice and Goodwill, The Church and Economic Life, etc. (through Division of Christian Life and Work) — \$401,000; and amounts in excess of \$100,000 each for United Church Women, Research and Survey, Public Relations, Treasury, Finance, and General Administration.

The corporate name of the Council is "National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America," as incorporated in 1950 under the laws of the State of New York.

MEMBER CHURCHES OF THE COUNCIL

(arranged by families)

Baptist:

American Baptist Convention

National Baptist Convention of America

National Baptist Convention, U.S.A., Inc.

Seventh Day Baptist GENERAL CONFERENCE

Brethren, Church of the

General Council of the Congregational

Christian Churches

Disciples of Christ, International Convention

Eastern Orthodox:

Greek Orthodox Church in America

Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America

Russian Orthodox Greek Catholic Church of
North America

Syrian Antiochian Orthodox Church

Ukrainian Orthodox Church of America

Evangelical United Brethren Church Friends:

Five Years Meeting of Friends
Religious Society of Friends of Philadelphia and
Vicinity

Lutheran:

Augustana Evangelical Lutheran Church
The Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church
of America
The United Lutheran Church in America

Methodist:

The Methodist Church
African Methodist Episcopal Church
African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church
Colored Methodist Episcopal Church

Moravian:

Moravian Church in America
Evangelical Unity of the Czech-Moravian
Brethren in North America

Presbyterian:

Presbyterian Church in the U.S.
The Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.
United Presbyterian Church of North America

Protestant Episcopal Church Reformed:

Evangelical and Reformed Church
The Reformed Church in America

*"So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and
everyone members one of another."*

ROMANS 12:5

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in the United States of America**

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